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ABSTRACT

The study reported in this paper focuses on teacher perceptions of students' affective or noncognitive behavior in the classroom. Elementary school teachers were asked to describe in writing five events or situations involving students that they judged to be fairly typical and that had occurred in their classrooms. The emphasis was upon events rather than individuals, so a broad perspective might be obtained on the teachers' perceptions of student behavior. Results suggest that students' adjustment to the classroom and other students is of greater concern to teachers than individual students' personal adjustment. It was also concluded that teachers' perceptions of classroom behavior is based more upon the group than upon individuals. (JD)

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT AFFECT

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Abstract

A large sample of elementary school teachers provided written descriptions of classroom affective events which were content analyzed in an effort to better understand teacher perceptions of student affect. Results suggest, among other things, that students' interpersonal adjustment is of greater concern to teachers than their intrapersonal adjustment, and that the individual is not necessarily the preferred "unit of analysis" as far as teacher perceptions of affect are concerned.

Teacher Perceptions of Student Affect[1]

Richard S. Prawat[2]

Winne and Marx (1977) argued recently that researchers cannot hope to develop adequate knowledge about the teaching process without taking into account the mental life of teachers and students, since it is in the mental arena that "teachers and students go about much of the business of promoting learning" (p. 670). This growing research interest in the role that teacher and student mental constructions play in the teaching/learning process can be attributed to new developments in cognitive psychology and sociology (Magoon, 1977). Not surprisingly, given this perspective, several studies demonstrate that the mental constructions of teachers and students *do* have behavioral significance. Brophy and Good's (1970) study, for example, shows that teachers' responses to students vary as a function of their academic expectations of the students. Rothbart, Dalfen, and Barrett (1971) obtained similar results.

The study reported in this paper focuses on teacher perceptions of students' affect. Several previous researchers have attempted to do this, directly or indirectly, employing a variety of approaches; teachers have been asked to rate narrative descriptions of certain student "types," for example, the rigid, conforming, orderly student (Feshbach, 1969;

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[1]The author wishes to thank Andrew Porter, Jere Brophy, Judith Lanier, Lee Shulman, and Joe Byers for their helpful comments during the various phases of this project.

[2]Richard S. Prawat is coordinator of an IRT study of Affective Outcomes in Education.

Helton & Oakland, 1977), or to rate their own students using various behavioral scales (Solomon & Kendall, 1977). A naturalistic approach was used by Willis (Note 1); he asked first-grade teachers to give their impressions of classmates as they went down the class list, and these data were then content analyzed. Willis (Note 1) also had teachers rank students on their expected achievement. He found that variables known to be related to student achievement, such as attentiveness, self-confidence, ability to do assigned tasks, and maturity, were closely associated with teachers' achievmement expectation rankings.

An Israeli psychologist, K. Benyamini (Note 2), has also done some interesting naturalistic research on teacher perceptions of students. Benyamini asked elementary school teachers to rate each of their pupils as "a pupil in general" on a 7-point scale, then introspect into the dimensional aspects which determined this general evaluation. Teachers then discussed their introspective notes in a group until a consensus was reached concerning the essential components, shaped in trait language. The teachers participating in the study then evaluated their students on the agreed upon traits. The six traits that were mentioned most frequently and were most valid -- that is, most highly correlated with the general evaluation -- were academic achievement, comprehension and ability, interest and curiosity, classroom participation, attention and concentration, and diligence.

The Willis and Benyamini studies appear to support Hofer's (Note 3) contention that teachers are most attentive to those pupil characteristics (affective as well as cognitive) which they consider to be directly relevant to their instructional goals. Thus teachers focus on students' academic ability and ability to function in the group instruction mode. As Solomon and Kendall (1977) put it, "Teachers' perceptions of students' academic

ability and performance are primary and influence perceptions of all other attributes" (p. 412).

In the research discussed thus far, teachers have been given little encouragement to focus specifically on the noncognitive or affective characteristics of students. In other studies, where this has been done, a more complex picture emerges. Solomon and Kendall (1977) conclude that rating scales which focus on nonintellectual characteristics result in greater discrimination by teachers between different student attributes. Lambert and Nicoll (1977) cite several teacher perception studies in which rating scales were used that provide support for a three-dimensional model of student affect. This model distinguishes among student characteristics relating to *classroom adaptation* (i.e., how the student accommodates to classroom demands), *interpersonal adjustment* (i.e., how the student interacts with others), and *intrapersonal adjustment* (i.e., what kind of person the student is: withdrawn, immature, etc.). Lambert and Nicoll's model suggests that teachers are concerned *both* with students' adaptational status and their adjustment characteristics.

In the present study, an attempt was made to examine teacher perceptions of student affect by means of a naturalistic approach. Elementary school teachers were asked to focus specifically on the affective or noncognitive behavior of students. Their task was to describe, in writing, five events or situations involving students which they judged to be fairly typical and which had actually occurred in their classrooms. Teachers were asked to discuss events or situations rather than individuals so that as broad a perspective as possible might be obtained regarding their perceptions of student affect. Teachers could focus on individuals, but they were also free to discuss small groups or the class as a whole.

A content analysis of the teacher vignettes enabled me to examine a number of possibilities. I thought, for example, that the *interpersonal* domain -- which emerges as an important dimension in rating scale studies -- might include more than child-to-child type interactions; I felt that child-to-group and child-to-teacher type interactions might constitute important aspects of the interpersonal domain for teachers, as well. A second possibility which I examined relates to the focus of the teacher's concern. There was no reason to assume, a priori, that the individual student and his/her responses constitute the preferred *unit of analysis* for teachers. Teachers, I thought, might be equally attentive to the affective characteristics of *groups* (a possibility which has generally been ignored in educational research to date). Presumably, teachers have ways of thinking about or characterizing groups which are comparable to the ways they think about individuals; for instance, teachers frequently refer to "the class." One issue in the content analysis, therefore, was how often teachers focused on groups as opposed to individuals in their descriptions of classroom events. A third possibility examined deals with the *object* of the affect. I wanted to know whether student attitudes toward subject matter, such as reading or math, were of great concern to teachers. Finally, by instructing teachers to provide complete descriptions of events, including the consequences of those events, I attempted to code their strategies -- to discover what sorts of things teachers said they would do to change student affective behavior.

Method

Subjects

Eighty-four elementary teachers from 36 schools in three school

systems participated in the study. Sixty-nine of the teachers were female, 51 of whom had seven or more years of experience and were classified as "relatively experienced;" the other 18 were classified as relatively inexperienced. Eight of the 15 male teachers were relatively experienced, seven relatively inexperienced.

Data Set

The following set of instructions was hand-delivered to teachers who volunteered to participate in the study.

> The Institute for Research on Teaching at Michigan State University is attempting to better understand classroom "life," that is, what goes on in classrooms. One area of concern, especially to the cooperating teachers at the Institute, is the so-called "affective" domain. This aspect of classroom life has been a difficult one to get a handle on; educators usually wind up discussing it in negative terms as the "noncognitive" side of teaching.
>
> Here's where you can be of great help to us. We need to get a better idea of what teachers mean when they talk about the "affective" or noncognitive behavior of students.
>
> We would like to have you describe in writing five classroom events or situations involving students. These descriptions should focus on the affective or noncognitive behaviors of students. The situations and events you describe should be fairly typical and have actually occurred in your classroom.
>
> Please describe as completely as you can what exactly happened, who it involved (first names only; please indicate sex of the child), what led up to the event and what the consequences were. It would also be helpful if you could indicate why you chose to describe the particular situation or event.

Five blank sheets of paper were attached to the instructions sheet. The instructions sheet asked teachers to provide further information about themselves and informed them that the experimenter would collect the descriptions in one week.

Content Analysis and Measures of Reliability

The coding scheme used in the content analysis was developed on a random sample of the data. Vignettes written by 15 teachers were selected for this purpose; these were omitted from subsequent analyses.

The intent was to develop a coding system which captured the "quality" of the affective event in as much detail and with as much reliability as possible. Thus the following variables were coded:

1. The "main actor(s)" or protagonist in the event being described.

2. The nature of the teacher's "primary response" in the event, as inferred by raters. Choices included "impulsive," "seems to be thought through on the spot," "planned ahead," and so forth.

3. Whether or not another child was directly affected by a main actor's (s') verbal or physical response.

4. The setting or context in which the event took place.

5. Whether or not in the course of the event a specific reference was made to someone's emotions or feelings.

6a. The emotion or feeling actually described (as indicated in category 5). A number of choices of positive and negative emotion were provided (i.e., "sadness/unhappiness").

6b. In the absence of a specific reference to the main actor's (s') feelings or emotions, an inference about whether the feelings were primarily positive or negative, or whether there was enough behavioral data to make an inference.

7. The object of the main actor's(s') emotion or feeling: "self," "others," or subject matter.

8. Whether or not a "problem" occurred in the event, as viewed by the teacher; whether it was a relatively long- or short-term problem; and whether it was resolved.

9. The specific kinds of interventions or strategies used by the teacher. Examples of choices in this category included "discussion/explanation," "restitution," "self-management."

Following the development of the coding scheme, a fourth coder joined the three who had participated in the trial runs. Before formal coding began, a reliability check was computed among the six possible pairs of

coders. Reliability was determined by dividing the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus disagreements. Two sets of coefficients were computed. In the first, a "conservative" interpretation of agreement was used; in the second, "blanks" were counted as agreements. In other words, if both members of the pair felt that a certain category should *not* be checked, it was counted as an agreement.

The first set of reliabilities ranged between 71% and 79%; the second set ranged between 96.0% and 96.4% . In the formal coding, coders worked in pairs; in the event of disagreement, a third coder was consulted.

Results and Discussion

Content analysis data were analyzed by descriptive techniques such as frequency breakdowns and cross tabulations. The latter were used to examine relations between categories representing key vignette elements (e.g., the degree of association between the main actor(s) category and the problem occurrence category). In addition, I made comparisons between certain subsets of the sample to test certain hypotheses, e.g., whether experienced teachers perceived themselves as more "planful" in their responses than inexperienced teachers. In several of the analyses, data were combined across sub-categories in various ways. For example, frequencies for various intervention or strategy sub-categories were combined to yield a *total interventions* variable. This helped me examine the association between such variables as the amount of teacher intervention and the extent to which problems were seen as resolved.

Summed Frequency Data

Tables 1-9 present frequency data compiled from the 345 vignettes

for each of the nine main categories. From these data, a composite picture of the kind of affective events described by teachers emerges. First, as Table 1 shows, the main character in a little over half the vignettes was the individual child. In 19% of the descriptions, the focus was on the whole class, and in 11%, on a group of children (i.e., more than two children). Thus teachers frequently do employ a *group* perspective regarding affect.

Table 1: Main Actor(s) in Event Being Described

Variable	Percent
Individual Child	53%
Two Children	15%
Small Group of Children	11%
Whole Class	19%
Teacher(s)	3%

The teachers very rarely appeared to respond impulsively; the vignettes indicated that, generally, their responses were "thought through on the spot" (47%) or "planned ahead" (31%) (see Table 2). The following is an example of planning ahead: "I put all that I had seen together and decided that Michelle was becoming the class 'goat' who could do no right. I determined to talk to the class about her when she went to her reading class."

Table 2: Nature of Teacher's or Teachers' "Primary" Response

Variable	Percent
None	14%
Impulsive	1%
Seems to be Thought Through on the Spot	47%
Planned Ahead	31%
Can't Tell	8%

Approximately 18% of the vignettes included references to some sort of direct physical or verbal action between the main character or characters and another child (see Table 3). Usually, this contact was negative in nature (80% of the time for physical action, 70% for verbal). (Name calling is an example of a negative verbal action.) Given the limited number of negative contacts reported overall, however, it would appear that direct physical or verbal conflict between two or more children does not represent a major problem for elementary school teachers.

Table 3: Another Child the Direct Object of an "Action" by Main Actor(s)*

Variable	Percent
Verbal	
Positive	27%
Negative	70%
Can't Tell	3%
Physical	
Positive	20%
Negative	80%
Can't Tell	0%

*Occurs approximately 18% of the time

Not surprisingly, when reference was made to a *specific* setting or context, the one most frequently cited was "instructional activity" (see Table 4).

Table 4: Setting or Context in Which Event Occurs

Variable	Percent
Instructional Activity (includes seatwork)	32%
Transition	5%
Housekeeping	2%
Free Time	3%
Lunch Period	
To or From	1%
During	2%
Recess or Gym	
To or From	3%
During	5%
Before or After School	5%
Other	3%
Can't Tell (general)	39%

As Table 5 shows, teachers infrequently referred to specific emotions or feelings. In only 25% of the vignettes did the teachers attribute an affective "state" to the student main actor or actors. For the most part, then, it appears that teachers focused on what the students *did* and not on what they *felt*.

Table 5: If Present, "Affect" (e.g., Emotion or Feeling) Attributed to:

Variable	Percent	
	Main Actor	Not Main Actor
Student(s)	25%	3%
Teacher(s)	0%	5%
Parent(s)	0%	2%
Other	0%	0%

When teachers did attribute an affective "state" to the student main actor(s), the state most frequently mentioned was "anger," followed by "upset," "sadness/unhappiness," "fear" and "satisfaction/pride" (mentioned in an equal number of vignettes), and "happiness/joy" (see Table 6a). When the affect of the main actor(s) was not actually described by the teacher but could be inferred from descriptions of student behavior, it was more often negative (38%) than positive (21%).

As Table 6b shows, in 41% of the cases, no affective student state could be inferred from the behavioral events described. There are two possible explanations for this: either the teacher provided too little descriptive data to allow for an inference, or feelings and emotions were irrelevant in the events being described. The latter would probably be the case if, to use Lambert and Nicoll's (1977) distinction, teachers were focusing on "adaptation" as opposed to "adjustment." Adaptation to the classroom involves such things as following directions, working independently, and the like, while adjustment relates directly to the students' psychological well being. Inspection of the teacher vignettes labeled "inferential" or "can't tell" reveals that a large number did, in fact, deal with classroom procedure. The following was typical.

Table 6a: Type of Affect Actually Described*

Variable	Number
Positive	
Satisfaction/Pride	10
Happiness/Joy	8
Interest/Excitement	4
Affection	3
Other	1
Confidence	0
Negative	
Dislike/Anger	20
Upset	12
Sadness/Unhappiness	11
Fear/Uncertainty	10
Disapproval/Disgust	6
Frustration	6
Other	6
Shame/Embarassment	4
Worry/Concern	4
Resentment	2

*Reported in actual frequencies, not in percentages.

Table 6b: Type of Affect Inferred by Raters

Variable	Percent
Positive	21%
Negative	38%
Can't Tell	41%

> I was taking a reading group of three students (Roy, Karen, Ellen). Roy was trying to read a page from the story and J.T. (boy) kept coming back to our table and interrupting us with questions about his assignment. About the third interruption, Roy told J.T. to go back to his seat until I was done listening to him read. J.T. just kept talking and I explained to J.T. that his interruptions were bothering this reading group. He said okay and went to his seat and waited until we were finished.
>
> During J.T.'s reading group he was very watchful that no one interrupted us. As soon as someone started to head back he would tell them to wait their turn like he had to do. No one argued with him, and we had no interruptions the rest of the day.

About 25% of all the vignettes dealt with "adaptational" issues of this sort.

Table 7 lists the *objects* of the students' feelings as identified by the teachers (that is, toward whom or what the feelings were directed). The data suggests that teachers were less concerned with intrapersonal adjustment (defined in terms of feelings toward oneself) than with interpersonal adjustment (defined in terms of feelings toward others). In only 19% of the vignettes were the feelings or attitudes attributed to individuals directed toward "self;" in 41%, feelings were said to be directed toward "others" -- other individuals, groups, or the teacher. (As Table 7 shows, 13% of the time, the teacher was the object of individual and group "affect"). Assuming a relation between the frequency with which certain kinds of affective events were discussed and their importance to teachers, it indeed appears that teachers placed more importance on interpersonal affect than on intrapersonal affect.

Subject matter was seldom the object of either an individual student's or a group's affect. Only 1% of the student feelings described or inferred were directed toward subject matter. Interestingly, 11% were directed toward the "school as a whole". These results are surprising because subject matter attitudes are thought to lie at the heart of the

Table 7: Object of Main Actor's(s') Affect (What is the feeling or attitude directed toward?)

Variable	Percent	
	On the Part of an Individual	On the Part of a Group
Non-Subject Matter		
Toward "Self"	19%	3%
Toward Other(s)		
One Student	14%	9%
Students	11%	4%
Teacher(s)	11%	2%
Parent(s)	0%	0%
Others	5%	0%
Subject Matter		
Math	0%	0%
Language Arts	1%	0%
Reading	0%	0%
Social Studies	0%	0%
School	11%	3%

affective domain (Khan & Weiss, 1973). Perhaps the teachers in this study did not perceive attitudes of this sort as "noncognitive" (see instructions to teachers, above). Or, maybe, subject matter affect is not much of an issue for teachers working with young children. Children in the early years generally approach school learning tasks with a positive attitudinal set (Dunn, 1968).

The problem occurrence and resolution category yielded some interesting results (see Table 8). For example, 71% of the events described involved some sort of "problem," in the sense that teacher

intervention was called for or teachers expressed negative feelings about the event ("I'm concerned about . . ."). A majority (58%) of the problems reported were relatively long term in nature (i.e., they had happened more than once and in a number of different contexts). Even so, according to the vignettes, 47% of all problems were resolved through teacher intervention, and only 20% went "unresolved." It may be that teachers are overly optimistic about their ability to change troublesome student behavior. Jackson (1968) talks about a "dramatic and almost magical quality" of many of the changes in student behavior described by teachers.

Table 8: Problem Occurrence and Resolution

Variable	Percent
Problem Occurrence	
Yes	71%
No	26%
Can't Tell	3%
Type of Problem	
Relatively Short Term	42%
Relatively Long Term	58%
Problem Resolution	
Resolved	47%
Temporarily Resolved	17%
Unresolved	20%
Can't Tell	16%

Table 9 shows the frequency breakdown for the various interventions or strategies used by the teachers. According to the data, the teachers relied more on verbal strategies than nonverbal ones. The most frequently mentioned single intervention strategy was "discussion/explanation" (25%), followed by "commands/requests" (13%). Indirect strategies, in which the teacher seeks the aid of parents, classmates, the principal, and others in attempting to deal with an individual's problem behavior, comprised 23% of the strategies mentioned by teachers.

Smith (1978), building on the research on parental discipline practices, distinguishes between two approaches to classroom management. In the first, the "inductive" approach, the teacher as socializing agent employs techniques -- such as discussion/explanation or restitution -- which are designed to induce the student into both accepting responsibility for and judging the appropriateness of his or her own behavior. In the second approach, the teacher attempts to "sensitize" the students to the problem situation by using techniques that focus on the external risk of punishment; threats and punishment are common in this approach. Data from Smith's study, and from the present study, indicate that elementary school teachers strongly prefer the inductive, reason-oriented approach. Hence, it is possible that nearly as much teaching takes place in the affective domain as in the cognitive (Stake & Easley, Note 4).

Relations Between Variables

As mentioned above, cross-tabulation procedures were used to examine relations between certain key categories. Because of the focus on individual teacher perceptions, the following approach was taken in analyzing data. First, relationships between variables of interest were tested on a teacher-by-teacher basis by means of chi square analyses; raw chi squares for each relationship were then averaged across teachers

Table 9: Type of Teacher Intervention or Strategy Directed Toward Students

Variable	Percent
Direct	
Verbal	
Commands/Requests	13%
Discussion/Explanation	25%
Verbal Reinforcement	6%
Verbal Punishment	2%
Threats	3%
Student Solution	2%
Nonverbal	
Physical Restraint	1%
Nonverbal Reinforcement	8%
Nonverbal Punishment	5%
Restitution	0%
Separation	2%
Isolation/Removal	3%
Deliberate Ignoring	2%
Physical Proximity	1%
Self Management	2%
Restructuring	2%
Indirect (Involving Others)	
Other Teachers	1%
Parents	7%
Classmates	8%
Principal	3%
Support Services	2%
Other	2%

to obtain mean chi square values. Finally, t-tests were used to determine whether these mean chi square values differed significantly from the expected chi square values, based on the number of degrees of freedom (Hayes, 1963).

The first set of relations examined involved the "amin actor(s)" category. Specifically, my interest centered on possible differences in teachers' perceptions of individuals and groups with regard to problem behavior. Associations between the main actor(s) category and the "problem occurrence and resolution" sub-categories were tested to determine (1) whether more problem behavior was indicated when teachers discussed events involving individual children rather than small groups of children or the whole class; (2) whether problems involving individuals tended to be different from those involving groups (i.e., more "long term" in nature); (3) whether, from the teachers' perspective, problems involving groups were more or less easily resolved than those involving individuals.

The first relationship was statistically significant (t (28) = 3.12, $p < .01$). When a problem was indicated, an individual child usually was the main character involved (55% of the time); the next most frequently cited category was the "two-children" category (mentioned in 17% of the problem situations). Conversely, when a problem was *not* indicated, teachers were most often focusing on the whole class in their descriptions (27% of the time).

The relationship between the kind of problem described and the subject of the vignette was not significant (t (11) = .33, $p < .40$). Individual children were not involved in more of the long-term problems than groups of children; nor was the reverse true.

The association between the main actor(s) category and the problem resolution sub-category was significant (t (27) = 2.38, $p < .03$). Teachers apparently perceived themselves as somewhat more adept at handling problems at the individual than at the group level. They indicated that they had successfully resolved over half (53%) the problem situations in which individual children were the main actors, and only 38% of the problem situations in which the whole class was the focus. An interesting reversal of this pattern occurred in the case of problems classified as "temporarily resolved."[3] Thirty-eight percent of the problems involving whole-class main actors fell into the temporarily-resolved category compared to only 17% of the problems involving individual children. Thus, as teachers view it, problems involving groups may require more long-term monitoring than those involving individuals.

To further examine the individual versus group issue, a variable was created by adding the number of positive and negative affects directly or inferentially attributable to the main actor(s). This variable was used to determine whether a relationship existed between the main actor(s) category and the kind of affect discussed (i.e., positive or negative). This was, in fact, the case; positive and negative feelings were distributed differently across the main actor(s) category (t (9) = 3.63, $p < .01$). Negative affect was attributed to the individual 82% of the time, positive affect only 20% of the time. On the other hand, when the main actor was the whole class, "good" feelings were much more likely to be attributed than "bad" (33% versus 6% of the time). Clearly, then, the teachers did not talk about groups in the same way as they talked about individuals.

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[3]Problems are considered temporarily resolved if the teacher continues to rely on an intervention strategy or strategies.

The difference between teacher perceptions of groups and individuals becomes even more obvious upon close examination of the frequency data relating to the object of the main actor's(s') affect. Here, it is important to distinguish between the kind of affect that individuals and groups direct toward others. When positive affect was directed toward an individual student, it usually was on the part of a group (56% of the time). Conversely, when negative affect was directed toward a student, it usually was on the part of an individual (64% of the time). Similarly, in almost a third of the cases in which positive affect was directed toward the teacher, the main character was a group; the group was never the main actor in those instances when negative affect was directed toward the teacher. Thus it appears that the concept of the group has a more positive connotation for teachers than the concept of the individual.

A second variable was created by summing frequencies for the various intervention sub-categories; this "total interventions" variable was significantly related to the nature of the problem described (long term or short term) and to the extent to which teachers perceived the problem as resolved. (The respective t-test comparisons were, t (12) = 1.94, $p < .05$, and t (31) = 2.31, $p < .03$.) The teachers used more strategies for resolving relatively long-term problems than for short-term problems, and the more interventions they used, the more they perceived the problems as being resolved. The data breakdown was as follows: 139 strategies were reported in vignettes in which problems were resolved; 72 in vignettes in which problems were temporarily resolved; 61 in vignettes in the "can't tell" category (where there was some ambiguity about whether or not the problems were resolved); and 51 in vignettes where the problems were not resolved. Thus, from the standpoint of

teacher perceptions, *more* intervention is better than less.

Not surprisingly, given the relationships described above, the teachers also indicated that they respond differently to different types of problems. There was a significant relationship between the degree of planfulness evident in their responses and the kinds of problems being described (t (8) = 2.33, $p < .01$). "Planned ahead" was the most frequently checked category as far as long-term problems were concerned; "seems to be thought through on the spot" was most often checked for short-term problems.

Subgroup Comparisons

In the final set of analyses, I compared the responses of teachers from different subgroups (i.e., teachers with different background characteristics). Of primary interest was the contrast between teachers in the early and later elementary grades and that between experienced and inexperienced teachers.

The early/late distinction, however, was confounded with the experience/inexperience distinction, and both of these were further confounded with teacher sex. Thus, while 44% of the later grade teachers were relatively inexperienced (i.e., six or fewer years of teaching experience), only 18% of the early elementary teachers fell into this category. Over 90% of the teachers in the early elementary grades were females, compared with 42% in the later elementary grades. Finally, there was a slightly higher percentage of females in the experienced category than in the inexperienced category (84% vs. 78%).

Early and later-grade elementary teachers. Because both sex and experience effects were confounded with the grade-level effect (i.e., earlier vs. later elementary), I decided to do separate grade-level

comparisons for subjects of each sex by teaching experience category. As it turned out, however, values for all but one of the categories were too low to test our hypothesis adequately. The exception was the experienced female category. Hence, comparisons were done only for those in this group.

I hypothesized that teachers in the early elementary grades would perceive their students' overall attitudes as more positive than teachers in the later elementary grades. The following procedure was used to test this hypothesis. Two scores were computed for each teacher in the two groups. The first consisted of the proportion of vignettes (total of five) involving positive affect; the second consisted of the proportion of vignettes involving negative affect. Scores were averaged for teachers within groups and *t*-tests were used to determine (1) whether the proportion of positive affective vignettes written by early-grade teachers differed significantly from the proportion written by later-grade elementary teachers, and (2) whether the proportion of negative affective vignettes differed significantly across the same groups.

The differences between groups were significant. The early elementary teachers wrote a greater percentage of vignettes involving positive affect than the later elementary teachers (t (30) = 7.50, $p < .01$); mean proportions for the two groups were .30 and 0, respectively. Conversely, the later elementary teachers wrote a greater percentage of vignettes involving negative affect than did the early-grade teachers (t (34) = 1.86, $p < .05$); mean proportions here were .60 and .38, respectively.

Experienced and inexperienced teachers. Because the experience/inexperience variable was confounded with sex and grade level, separate comparisons were again required. As in the case of the previous

comparison, frequency values were high enough to test our hypotheses adequately in only one of the four sex-by-grade level groupings, the early elementary female group.

Four kinds of teacher perceptions were compared: perceptions of primary responses to students, perceptions of problem occurrence, perceptions of problem type, and perceptions of problem resolutions. I hypothesized that experienced teachers would give evidence of greater planning in their responses to students than inexperienced teachers. With regard to problem occurrence, type, and resolution, we thought that the inexperienced teachers would concentrate more on "one-shot" discipline problems in their written descriptions of affective events, whereas experienced teachers would discuss a wider range of classroom phenomena; hence, I hypothesized that (1) inexperienced teachers should produce a higher proportion of vignettes with problem occurrences than experienced teachers; (2) inexperienced teachers should provide a higher proportion of vignettes with short-term as opposed to long-term problems; and (3) inexperienced teachers should produce a higher proportion of vignettes in which problems are resolved.

The same procedure that was used to compare early-grade teachers to later-grade teachers was used to test the four hypotheses. One of the four was supported. As expected, a higher proportion of planned responses were made by experienced teachers (.39 vs. .19 for relatively inexperienced teachers; $\underline{t}$ (28) = 2.86, $p < .05$) and the percentage of "thought through on the spot" type teacher responses was greater for inexperienced teachers (.73 versus .50, $\underline{t}$ (34) = 2.09, $p < .03$). The hypothesized relationship between teacher experience and the frequency with which problems were perceived to occur was not supported, however; neither was the relationship between teacher experience and

problem resolution. Equal amounts of problem behavior were described by teachers in the two groups (.65 for both sets of teachers). Experienced and inexperienced teachers also reported equal success in dealing with problem behavior. Forty-five percent of the problem situations described by experienced teachers were resolved or temporarily resolved, compared with 36% of the problem situations described by inexperienced teachers (t (37) = 1.13, $p < .25$). Nor was any significant difference found in the types of problems described by teachers (t (38) = 1.00, $p < .25$). On the average, 2 out of 5 vignettes written by inexperienced teachers involved relatively short-term problems, compared with 1.4 out of 5 written by experienced teachers.

Thus the hypothesis that inexperienced teachers would tend to concentrate more on short-term discipline problems in their descriptions than experienced teachers received limited support, at best. However, the data *do* support the contention that background factors, such as the grade level taught by the teacher or the teacher's experience, are related to teacher perceptions of classroom events.

Concluding Remarks

This study of teacher perceptions of affective events in the classroom suggests a number of conclusions.

First of all, Lambert and Nicoll's (1977) distinction between classroom adaptation, and the interpersonal and intrapersonal adjustment dimensions appears to be a useful one. In this study, approximately 25% of all written vignettes dealt with adaptation to classroom routine on the part of both individuals and groups (i.e., following directions, working independently). About 13% of the events described by the teachers involved intrapersonal adjustment -- that is, feelings or attitudes the individual may have about him/herself; 29% involved interpersonal adjustment.

Thus, judging by the events teachers described, interpersonal adjustment seems to be of greater concern to elementary school teachers than intrapersonal adjustment.

Second, the individual is not always the preferred unit of analysis as far as teacher perceptions of student affect are concerned. In almost a third of the affective events described, the focus was on a small group of children or the class as a whole.

A third conclusion that can be drawn is that in discussing affective events, teachers do *not* make frequent reference to specific emotions or feelings on the part of students. They tend to focus more on what students *do* than what they feel.

In addition, few teachers deal with subject matter affect.

Further, teachers perceive a significant amount of problem behavior, but feel they are quite successful at resolving most problems. They also clearly prefer positive discipline techniques (such as the use of discussion and explanation) over more punitive techniques.

Another conclusion we reached is that when teachers talk about groups, it is usually in a positive context. For example, when a problem situation was indicated, an individual usually was the focus of attention. When a problem was *not* indicated, teachers were more likely to be focusing on the whole class.

Finally, teacher perceptions of affect are related to teacher background factors. The events described by teachers in the primary grades, for instance, were characterized by more positive affect than those described by teachers in the later elementary grades.

This study is important not only because it contributes to our knowledge about the *mental life* of teachers, but because it helps clarify what is meant by the term "affective," as in "affective behavior"

or "affective domain." As a result, it may contribute to the solution of a commonly cited problem in education -- lack of progress toward the development of adequate measures of affect. Fifteen years ago, Bloom and his associates wrote that what was missing in education was a systematic effort to evaluate growth in the affective area comparable to what was being done in the cognitive area (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964); more recently, in a discussion of Follow-Through programs, Wisler, Burns, and Iwamoto (1978) concluded that "the immediate prospects for better instruments for noncognitive outcomes are not good" (p. 182). This lack of progress in affective measurement can no doubt be attributed to a number of factors. However, the task has no doubt been made more difficult by educators' inability to arrive at a consensus about *what* ought to be assessed in the way of affect. Because teachers deal with student affect on a daily basis, a good place to begin this task would be with further research into teacher perceptions of student affect -- the affective responses teachers regard as most important. Once we better understand what it is that should be measured in the affective domain, decisions about how to measure it will follow.

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